

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 159.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 1867.

PRICE 1½d.

OLD ELTON'S POST-OBIT.

MOST City-men of forty years' standing or so will recollect old Elton, a tall, stooping man, all over gray, and so threadbare in habiliments, that he might have been taken for the poor relation of some of their porters, if he had not been known to be the most successful speculator between Capel Court and Temple Bar. I suppose old Elton had been young some time in his life, but I never heard the history of that period, except that fortune, or somebody else, had kept him pretty tight in the pockets, by which sensible people accounted for his uncommon skill in money-making and money-keeping too. When I had the honour of his acquaintance, he resided in a three-pair back in Shoe Lane; his board and lodging were believed to cost him five shillings a week, exclusive of an extraordinary budget for ginger-wine wherewith to treat his friends; and I am not aware that he was at any expense for washing. Yet, besides investments in every paying speculation in and about London, and money kept nobody knew where, but ready for every good thing that chanced to turn up, old Elton was owner of a comfortable estate, which had come to him somehow from his ancestors, with a park and mansion, game and tenant-farmers, called Hareslee, and situated in the Weald of Kent. They said he had speculated in letting the place more than once; but not finding that move satisfactory, he had settled a careful old couple, together with one cow, on the premises, sold the game by yearly contract to the best-paying poulterer he could discover, and went down himself every quarter-day to look after the tenant-farmers and collect his rents.

The careful old couple above mentioned formed Mr Elton's entire retinue in the shape of servants; but I got into his service, too, in a different capacity, being clerk to one of his friends. That circle was made up of two choice spirits, an attorney named Goodchild, and a stockbroker called Mugridge.

The former was my master, in those days. He had taken me into his office to be useful; and I

believe he made me so at a scanty salary, always paid in driblets, and kept my widowed mother, who had no money to pay for articles, and myself also, in tune, by promising to make an attorney of me, if I behaved well. I cannot say if the condition was fulfilled or not; I know the promise never was; but I did a good deal of clerk's work for old Elton, Goodchild, Mugridge, & Co. They did not take that style and title in the City, but they deserved it, for never was company more united in operations, or more varied in men.

My ostensible employer, Mr Goodchild—he liked to be called Esquire—was a sharp-featured, active little man, with a great opinion of himself, a very bad one of all the rest of the world, and a habit of looking at every thing, place, and person as if he expected to find something wrong about them. Particular people would have thought the name under which he journeyed through life and law a considerable misnomer. I suppose there were sins he had no mind to, that being the case with most men; but a keener eye for the monetary advantage, or a readier hand to clutch it, I never had the pleasure of dealing with. There was no trick of the commercial cards in which Mr Goodchild had not tried his hand; he had promoted companies, he had established banks, he had organised societies, and been secretary or solicitor to them all; but what became of Mr Goodchild's profits, it is beyond my scope to imagine. He lived in Skinner Street, in a style rivalling that of old Elton himself; his office in Blackstone's Buildings was a ground-floor closet about six feet square; his clothes were in a state of perpetual seediness; and after his departure from this world, I never heard that his sorrowing relations, who all lived in Whitechapel, discovered any hoard to go to law about.

The second friend, Mr Mugridge, was a tall, stout, broad-faced man, with every appearance of money and money's worth, good broad-cloth, fine linen, genuine gold watch and chain, pin and ring. His house was in Cumberland Square, Tyburnia. He was the supporting pillar of a dissenting chapel, to which his wife and six daughters

set the fashion. Nobody knew better what was in or out of season: he was a powerful talker in favour of whatever was uppermost; had a boundless faith in mankind, according to his own account; and ten years after, I heard him tried for forgery and embezzlement at the Central Criminal Court.

The principal I have already described; and it must be acknowledged that the contrast in those three City Graces was remarkable; but the happiest of happy families could not have exhibited more union and concord than they did in the pursuit of money. They had different ways of using the article, but they were equally determined to get it, and doubtless had an uncommon suitability to each other's service, which brought and kept them together. The society was secret and safe, because small; Goodchild did the soliciting, Mugridge did the stockbroking, old Elton supplied the funds, and I was honorary clerk and man-of-all-work to the three.

In that capacity, I was permitted to share in, or rather to witness their meetings, which took place in the three-pair back in Shoe Lane, summer and winter, every evening in the week, except on the quarter-days, when old Elton went down to Hareslee, and on the Sundays, when Mugridge had to be at the dissenting chapel. The sittings commenced between eight and nine, and terminated between eleven and twelve. The attorney and the stockbroker gave accounts of their respective stewardships for the day; business and business-men were discussed; new operations were projected and debated, and I wrote the requisite letters to their chiefs' dictation, at a table propped against the wall, for it had but two legs, and furnished with a broken ink-bottle, and one tallow-candle of ten to the pound.

My eyes were keen in those days, and if my wits had been so, I might have learned the whole art and mystery of money-making.

Nothing else was talked of in that chamber; old Elton neither could nor would have any subject but it and its belongings, and he was master not only of the situation but of the men. If he had any other amusement or relaxation except those evening meetings, I never heard of it; old Elton required no more; they were his ball, his opera, his parliament, and his cabinet council; there he was great, glorious, and listened to; and it was a striking comment on our commercial progress to see the over-spending, over-feeding stockbroker, who had rushed up to Shoe Lane after a luxurious dinner, seated between the seedy attorney and the shabby old man, at an entertainment consisting of cheap stale biscuits and ginger-wine, which Elton generally watered when the bottle got low.

Those feasts of reason commonly came off after some remarkable stroke of business, when the master of the three-pair back would unbend his mind from weightier cares, and give his guests lessons on his method of nursing candle-ends so as to get the greatest amount of burning out of them, or the savings he had made by never cutting bread under a week old. On such entertaining topics he would enlarge for hours in his good-humoured times; but for grumbling-days—and they came pretty often—the old gentleman had another and apparently exhaustless subject, the unthrifty doings of his nephew, Rattler Elton, Esq. Whoever bestowed the baptismal name upon that scion of his house, had not been gifted with a knowledge of things to come, for it was singularly unsuitable to

the man. Rattler Elton, Esq. was a tall, slender, fair-faced and fair-haired youth; nobody could have called him anything else, though he was approaching twenty-five. His carriage was genteel; his clothes were neatly put on; he had a small voice and a subdued, simpering manner, reminding one of a boarding-school girl under surveillance. They said he had been brought up by a grandmother and two maiden aunts in the country; but Rattler was heir to the ancestral estate of Hareslee; for the time being, however, his heritage was a clerkship in the Stamp-office, with a salary under one hundred per annum, to which his excellent uncle never added a shilling. How Rattler contrived to be extravagant, and live on that sum, would have puzzled anybody but the select circle in the three-pair back; but the stockbroker and the attorney, not to speak of my humble self, heard of the shirts he got washed, the gloves he got cleaned, the hats that did not last him above a year, and the times he had been caught going into theatres at half-price, till they almost believed him a spendthrift of the first ability. If Rattler did not know his own misdeeds, it was not for want of hearing them related. On most of the banquet-nights of ginger-wine and stale biscuits, he was present; and the cowed composure with which he listened to the old man's lecture, or propitiated him by declining the offered viands, was a lesson in legacy-hunting not to be forgotten.

Nevertheless, Rattler was troubled with some glimmering of the wild-fire which lures unwary youth from the paths of prudence and sobriety. I found him in the three-pair back one night when I chanced to be some minutes before the time, in a state of tremendous excitement; the poor soul's whity-brown hair was standing on end, and his eyes were rolling in a frenzy which was not fine, as he cried: 'Uncle, uncle, I borrowed his money, and I must pay him now.'

'You must drink as you have brewed, Rattler; I never encourage gambling transactions,' said the old sinner, who had speculated on every bull and bear Mugridge helped to let loose in the Stock Exchange, for I don't know how many years. The case was one of some folly and more hardship. The subdued nephew, with his clerkship in the Stamp-office, and his small salary, had scraped acquaintance—I believe it was at one of his half-price goings to the Haymarket—with a gentleman who called himself Captain Fitzgerald, and was known on all the outskirts of the sporting-world. The captain had a large assortment of friends, including black-legs, Jews, and sheriff-officers. He had passed by more than one name. Nobody knew exactly how he lived, but it was not on the lean of the land. Some of the London tailors could have told how he dressed. That had been the captain's history for more than twenty years, beyond which there was no account of him, but a general impression that he had come out of Ireland, and been some time in the army. The captain was good-natured in his way, and had a fancy for patronising young men—showing them the world, he called it; and Rattler Elton being a youth to his mind, got a share of the captain's protection, was introduced to racing-men, acquired the habit of betting, and having lost considerably on *Thunderbolt* at the last Derby, would have been hard-up if the captain had not obliged him with a loan. The transaction might not have been heard of for some time; but that very day Fitzgerald happened to be arrested for a debt which the loan would pay off;

in his distress, he sent post to Rattler, and Rattler, having no other resource, flew to his uncle. He might as well have flown to the Thames Tunnel: old Elton would not advance a sixpence. That his nephew had made such an acquaintance without apprising him; that he had dared to bet and borrow, contrary to his express advice and injunction, was bad enough; but to expect him to part with his money for the liberation of Captain Fitzgerald, was something very like sacrilege in his eyes.

I thought poor Rattler would have lost the little reason he was possessed of; he begged, implored, and promised enough to move a Bank of England director, but all to no purpose. Drinking as he had brewed, and never encouraging gambling transactions, was old Elton's ultimatum; and an unexpected effect it had upon his nephew, for as the old gentleman attempted to improve the occasion by one of his accustomed lectures, Rattler astonished not only myself, but Mugridge and Goodchild, who had just arrived, by rushing out of the three-pair back, and slamming the door behind him.

Old Elton was some minutes in recovering from the shock, and then he gave us his decided opinion that Rattler was bound for the gallows. The whole case was directly rehearsed and commented on in Mr Elton's own racy style. The stockbroker's horror was extreme, the attorney's was greater, if possible. But in the afternoon of the next day I was sent by my respected employer to wait on the gallant captain in a sponging-house, for the extrication of gentlemen in embarrassed circumstances was a peculiar branch of his business, and Fitzgerald, I suppose in desperation, had become one of his clients.

'Tell him,' said Goodchild, 'that I cannot undertake to stir in the business for less than two guineas paid down; and, Jenkins, you know what views I have for you—not a word about old Elton or his nephew.'

I did not say a word about either, for poor Rattler was there, in the dusty, dingy room where they had lodged his friend, seated at its never cleaned window, with his head leaned on his hands, and the pawnbroker's loan on his watch and other trinkets lying on the table.

'I won't touch it, my boy—I won't touch it; it wouldn't pay the fellow, and you would want your hardware,' said Fitzgerald, as he walked up and down the room. It was but a stride for him. The captain was a tall, handsome man, not young, and a good deal the worse for wear from his way of getting through life, but with considerable remains of the gentleman about him. 'It was my own fault,' he continued, taking another stride. 'I had a presentiment of the King's Bench ever since Saturday. A man should never be long out of Boulogne, after they threaten proceedings.'

'I thought my uncle would have lent the money,' whimpered poor Rattler.

'Well, you are now sure he would not. But never mind; I'll get on as well as the rest of the jailbirds. The place will not be quite new to me; but'—and the captain emphasised his resolution with an oath—'I'll have satisfaction on that old money-grub, for his behaviour to a gentleman in difficulties.'

My interview with Fitzgerald had no result—the two guineas were not forthcoming. He sent me back to ask credit from Goodchild; and when I had delivered my message, the attorney said: 'Make out that bill of sale, Jenkins; we'll move no more

in the captain's business—it won't pay.' Somebody moved in the captain's business, however, for late in the evening his debt was paid, and he was at liberty. He told his friends young Elton had behaved like an angel to him. The nephew was never more seen in Shoe Lane; but his uncle had greater cause than ever for lecture and lamentation, for the young man became positively fast—was seen in all places of public amusement—was out at all hours, and not in the best of company—was known to throw dice, and like something strong; and within six months after the night he had slammed the door, was diligently sought for by the London police on a charge of mistaking the property of the Stamp-office for his own. The police did not find him; he had embarked in good or bad time in a Liverpool steamer bound for New York; but the steamer met with stormy weather, struck and went to pieces on a rock off the west coast of Ireland, and young Elton's name was in the list of the drowned. The old gentleman in Shoe Lane, when he heard the fact, merely remarked that there was what came of extravagance and taking no advice; that Hareslee would now go to the other branch of the family, who were every one greater fools than Rattler; but he would endeavour to leave something to the friend who behaved best to him.

Goodchild and Mugridge became more constant in their attendance after that declaration; but it was never carried into effect, partly through the procrastinating habits which people acquire as their time grows shorter, and partly because Mr Elton was occupied on a subject of greater interest. In the Weald of Kent, and bordering on Hareslee, lay an estate called Summerwood, and belonging to a family of the same name. They were represented, at the time of my story, by a young man and an old one—father and son; the former living in his ancestral mansion in a retired and sober way; the latter spending most of his time on the continent, and never coming home except when money was wanted. That state of things was of frequent recurrence, and had returned in a marked manner just then. Summerwood senior, offended by some more than common scapegracehip, had refused to grant further supplies, and Summerwood junior was resolved to raise them by a post-obit. The affair had to be kept particularly quiet, for fear of certain relations the young man had in London; but Mugridge and Goodchild got scent of it, and caused the thriftless heir to apply to their patron, old Elton. He relished the business for two reasons: first, because a large percentage could be got out of young Summerwood, circumstanced as he was; and secondly, because a holdfast on the Summerwood estate had been for many a year the cherished wish of Mr Elton's heart.

They had ginger-wine without water that evening, and half a pound of cheese with a powerful smell, which Elton called making a capital supper; but three allied sovereigns could not have arranged the partition of a conquered territory with greater triumph, or more regard to their particular interests. Mugridge and Goodchild had it on the best authority, including his valet and tailor, that the state of young Summerwood's finances would not allow of his refusing any conditions; his solicitor had admitted as much; and before the meeting broke up, it was settled that Goodchild should have the drawing up of the necessary instruments, and all the charges he could lay on;

that half the two thousand pounds which young Summerwood proposed to borrow should be lent him in the shape of shares in a certain company—I think it was called the Profitable Investment, and supposed to be rather shaky—which old Elton happened to have on hand; and that Mugridge should sell the said shares for the fortunate borrower at a swinging commission; while the interest on the whole loan was to be forty per cent.

I had the honour of doing clerk's work upon the requisite papers. Young Summerwood never came in person to our office, nor had any of the three the pleasure of seeing him, as far as I know; but his solicitor—his name was Littleboy, and he dwelt in Chancery Lane—fought a stout battle on his behalf, and must have shewn amazing generalship, for he got old Elton to lend nearly fifteen hundred of current money, kept Goodchild from charging more than twice his legal dues, and cut down Mugridge's commission on the Profitable Investment shares in equal proportion. At last the business was brought to a conclusion; young Summerwood signed, sealed, and delivered his bond in his solicitor's office, rather late in a winter evening, Mugridge and Goodchild being witnesses. The latter had left me at home to stir up some forgetful clients with my pen; but he gave me to understand that everything was done in due form; that old Elton handed over fifteen hundred in good Bank of England notes, and went home in such triumph over his hold on the Summerwood estate, that his landlady thought he must have heard of the death of some near relation, in whose will he had an interest. The honest man's idea was, that owing to the spendthrift habits of the heir, and the little money Summerwood senior was likely to leave, the post-obit, when it became due, might, by judicious management, be turned into a mortgage. In the subsequent meetings of the trio, when his neighbour in the Weald of Kent happened to be mentioned, he would point significantly to a strong, old-fashioned desk in a corner of the three-pair back, and hint that there was a good time coming. Mugridge generally responded to that signal with a shout, and Goodchild with a chuckle; but scarcely had the one got rid of his commission, and the other made away with his fees, when the good time did come, for the Kentish papers regretted to announce the death of Sir Charles Summerwood.

Old Elton had not been down at Hareslee for some time, and nobody in that quarter ever thought of writing to him; but the gratifying intelligence was brought by Mugridge to one of the evening meetings. He had got a hint of it from a Jew who did business in Capel Court, and was supposed to be deeply interested; and having made sure of his subject, Mugridge arrived with the *Kent Chronicle* and all its regrets in his hand, just as Goodchild and myself had taken our respective places in the three-pair back.

'You're a lucky man, Mr Elton,' he said, placing the welcome paragraph before his patron. 'Eight hundred pounds realised within two months, I may say.'

'Ah, yes!' and the old man rubbed his hands in a kind of frosty joy. 'I didn't think it would happen quite so soon; but he did look to be breaking down when I saw him last midsummer—that made me give in about the other five hundred, when the lawyer wouldn't take half the loan in

shares.—Is the young gentleman at home, I wonder?' Elton always spoke with great respect of the pigeons he meant to pluck.

'Don't know,' said Mugridge and Goodchild in a breath. 'Littleboy said he went to the continent, for fear of his father finding out matters.'

'Well, I have the safe thing here;' and old Elton stepped to his desk. Neither I nor his two satellites had ever seen him open it before; but now he slowly unlocked it, lifted the lid just sufficient to get his hand in and draw a paper out, locked it again, put the key in his pocket, came back to his seat, adjusted his spectacles to take a deliberate survey of his good-fortune, and unfolded the paper, saying, as he did so: 'I had put this quite away, thinking it wouldn't be wanted for a twelvemonth at least, and never looked at it since I brought it home from Littleboy's office. Dear me! the works of providence!'

'Are wonderful,' said Mugridge; and there was a minute or two of silence, while Mr Elton enjoyed himself over the bond. But suddenly, the old man leaped from his chair straight up like a salmon, with a cry so sharp and loud that it must have startled Shoe Lane.

'You villains, you thieves, you murderers!' he shouted, glaring on Mugridge, Goodchild, and me, with eyes that, even through his spectacles, looked like burning coals; 'you have all helped to rob me, and I am robbed and ruined; but I'll have just'—And all at once he reeled as if struck by some heavy hand, toppled over, and fell with a crash on the floor.

The next minute, we were all up, and so was the whole house; the landlady and her maid-of-all-work exerting themselves mightily in the screaming line. Old Elton was in a fit, at least we thought so, for his face twitched and twisted in an extraordinary manner, and he tried to speak, but could only get out, 'Rob—rob.' Mugridge and Goodchild bundled him up on his bed, which stood handy, and I flew to the nearest doctor. There happened to be one convenient. He came back with me, and at the first sight of old Elton, told us the gentleman had got a stroke of paralysis. I don't think Mugridge and Goodchild exactly heard what he said; their two heads were touching over the bond, which old Elton had dropped in his fall, and their astonished faces made me look at it too as they stepped back, leaving the paper open on the table. It was, to the best of my knowledge, a properly executed post-obit for two thousand pounds, at forty per cent. interest, to be paid, on the death of Edward Elton of Hareslee, by his nephew and heir-at-law, Rattler Elton. I had never seen the latter gentleman's handwriting; but both the attorney and the stockbroker, when they had sufficiently recovered their composure, assured me that the signature was marvellously like it; but how such an instrument had come into old Elton's possession, instead of the bond signed by young Summerwood, and payable on the death of his father, they could not imagine. Littleboy, the active and zealous solicitor, could have thrown some light on the subject; but when inquired for, he was gone nobody knew where, and his office was occupied by an insurance company. Young Summerwood, who happened to be at home—having reformed, they said, in the course of his father's last illness—denied all knowledge of the affair, and produced respectable evidence of his being on the continent at the time it occurred.

Neither Mugridge nor Goodchild would affirm that he was the man they saw sign the bond; and all their endeavours failed to trace out one of the parties from whom they had got information or assistance in the transaction. There was no legal investigation, partly because there was no probability of a satisfactory result, and partly owing to the state of the principal sufferer. From the paralytic stroke which had fallen upon him that evening, old Elton never recovered. He got out of bed, indeed, and was able to count his money, and talk in a half-articulate manner about being robbed and ruined, which was his theme to the last; but he was never again fit for business, nor could he ever be induced to look at, much less to speak to, Mugridge, Goodchild, or myself. By the doctor's advice, his nearest relations—a family of single cousins, whom he had allowed to live almost on charity—were sent for. They took him down to Hareslee, where he tottered about for some months, got another stroke, and died. His property was left among the cousins by a very ill-made will; but, strange to say, they had no lawsuit over it. It was generally believed that was owing to their dread of Rattler Elton somehow turning up again; but he never did, nor did I ever hear of anything that could explain or cast the smallest light on the mystery of old Elton's post-obit.

EMPTY LONDON.

THE idea of an empty London is in itself strikingly impressive, opening wide the field of boundless speculation, and furnishing material for the wildest imagination. We, who are daily accustomed to the din and bustle, the gaieties and pleasures, the gains, loss, labours, and turmoil of metropolitan life, to an unceasing noise and a never-ending toil, find it extremely difficult to conceive the reverse of present affairs—to grasp with any distinctness the grand and solemn idea of an empty London, which is not, however, so absurd, so far-fetched, or so unlikely to come to pass, as one would judge it at first thoughts to be. Cities almost, if not quite, as populous and as opulent, have been so far influenced by natural or artificial circumstances, that even their very sites are now simply conjectured at; or perhaps the ruin-studded wilderness, or shepherds' village, alone mark the remains of the boast of other days. Towns and cities must as inevitably go through birth, youth, rise, and decay, as does man. Ancient Babylon is lost in oblivion; Nineveh is lost in all but her ruins; the glories of Rome, Athens, and Carthage are departed never to return. Well may we ask: What has become of Tyre, the great prototype of modern London, as the Phœnicians are, in some respects, of modern Englishmen? Having, therefore, so many examples before her, it well behoves London to look into the causes of their downfall; but, more particularly, let her notice the influences which have made her the centre and capital of the commerce and wealth of the world. Any school-boy who reads his *Télémaque* must have learned the lessons which Mentor repeatedly endeavoured to instil in the mind of his ward—that the wealth and happiness of a city or country are occasioned and promoted by good social and political government, by an admirable situation, and by the natural enterprise of the inhabitants. All commercial cities, either ancient or modern, and none more so than London,

have enjoyed these boons before they have risen to any eminence, and the loss of one or all of them soon occasions their decay. The evil government of the Doges, coupled with the destruction of her advantageous situation by the discovery of the Cape route to the East Indies, transplanted the wealth of Venice and of the great inland sea to northern ports on the open ocean. Till navigation had opened the immense fertile districts of the Americas, and the islands of the South Seas, the Mediterranean ports possessed the commerce of the civilised world—the countries on its shores; but as civilisation spread, and happier climes, soils, and fruits were discovered, Venice and Genoa no longer represented the commerce of the world, but that only of a rather large inland lake.

London, having a first-class situation at the mouth of a wide river, and being near to the coast of France, was an important trading city during the times of the Romans and Saxons. It increased, in fact, so much in wealth and population, that one of the early Saxon kings made it his capital, instead of Winchester. The king's court, with its attractions for the aristocracy and gentry, quickly added to the metropolitan importance, which afterwards was extensively heightened by the discoveries of the New World and the Cape route, and reached its present climax through the modern scientific researches which have developed the steam systems. The true cause of London's present greatness is science, which in its application has particularly favoured our island, whose soil yields in abundance the food, or rather the fuel, necessary to its development. Without the coal and iron of the country, London might and would have been rich and prosperous, like Rotterdam, Rouen, Lisbon, and Cadiz; but she would not have reached, with a small population, and limited expanse of fertile country, the pre-eminence of the world's cities; nor could she hope, at the present moment, to compete with the maritime cities of America, which have the support of an immense district of rich fertile land. It is well for us to know that the secret of our success is neither the energy nor the enterprise of the people, but simply the mineral wealth, which has enabled us to manufacture, and since the working of steam-power, navigate cheaper and easier than our neighbours. Now, supposing that neither the advantageous position of London is damaged by the destruction of its port, by an earthquake, for instance, or any such natural cause, which have occurred to many cities before now, nor that the liberty of trade is suppressed by unwise laws and an evil government, still, if our coal fails, London must fall.

This is an influence which may operate against her with a more terrible and a quicker result than has ever before been experienced. So marvellous, indeed, have been the scientific discoveries of modern times, that one could scarcely be surprised if further investigation, and another advance toward scientific perfection, may not lead to the application of means and materials foreign to our soil and to our people. If, for instance, supposing the coal-supply to be inexhaustible (which is extremely doubtful), another cheaper substance for fuel were discovered, and we had it not, or had it only in common with other nations, does any one for a moment think that the inhabitants of North America and of Hindustan, would send their raw materials here, when they could manufacture them cheaper at

home? Disregarding, however, this scientific supposition, we should by no means treat our means of subsistence in the same off-hand manner; and pending the Report of the Commissioners appointed by the parliament of last session to investigate the extent of the coal-supply, we may, without their assistance, rest assured that it is not limitless, and therefore no time should be lost before giving every encouragement to all those who by their theories and experiments may demonstrate the best means to economise it, so that the prosperity of our country may be prolonged as far as possible. Mr John Stuart Mill deserves all the praise one can bestow on him for his true patriotism in taking in hand the interests of our posterity, by mooted the question in the House last session; and Sir Robert Peel did equal service in the same cause, about the same time, by drawing attention to the desirability and utility of a measure being adopted to enforce the dwellers in the metropolis and in large manufacturing towns to occasion their fires to consume their own smoke—a measure which is already partially adopted in manufactories and metropolitan furnaces—and which would not only beautify and cleanse the neighbourhood, but would also occasion a material economy in the consumption of coal.

It is not so hard to believe, then, that the prosperity of London will not endure for ever. Perhaps the metropolis will continue to increase in wealth and size for several centuries more; perhaps her decline will commence sooner than we anticipate. One thing is certain, that, sooner or later, the event will happen. She has had, or is having, her day; but when that is over, she must give place to a modern usurper, even as in days long past she usurped. It would be a very interesting study to learn the causes, signs, and omens of the fall of a city, and to mark the daily results—the fruits of the gradual operation of decay. Of course, no man can witness the beginning and the end, for the period extends long beyond a generation; but history and imagination may in a great measure fill up the gap of partial experience. Let us suppose that London continues in prosperity for three or four centuries more, and that civilisation, and science, and a population of seven or eight millions, have enriched and strengthened her mightily. With streets and terraces, and superb public buildings stretching through the whole county of Middlesex, and over the hills of Surrey and Kent, with untold riches and unsurpassed strength, the inhabitants will be less likely than we to believe in her decline. But signs are on the horizon; a little cloud gathers in the clear sky, and the burst of a heavy storm is but the matter of time. The fact is, the city has reached its climax; it no longer increases; and as there is no such thing as standing still, it must go back. If there are no longer any new buildings required, what must become of the innumerable builders, the hosts of masons, carpenters, bricklayers, and painters? Again, if the mechanic loses occupation, his shopkeeper does in a like degree custom. Some of the causes we have enumerated are operating on her decline. Commercial enterprise has developed itself to a greater degree in the New World; and thither flock the hungry and placeless for food and employment. The natural consequences of this exodus must be the increase of the value of labour and the decrease of the value of property. This alone is a sure sign of decay. In another generation,

property is of much less value, and labour has gone down with it, for landowners and householders must do their own work for a living. An immense emigration has left numberless houses uninhabited, and these are of necessity allowed to fall to pieces, or are pulled down, to leave bare the more profitable ground they occupy. In some instances, with much labour, whole suburban streets may be metamorphosed into something approaching their pristine appearance of pasture or garden; but the majority must be allowed to decay unmolested, a tearing down of brick walls and a clearance of foundations and pavements, leaving little fertile soil on a basement of gas-pipes, sewers, and railway tunnels.

Imagine the mountains of dust accumulated from the decay of the brick wildernesses of Shoreditch and Whitechapel, of Lambeth and Bermondsey! High winds carry clouds of this about in all directions, which block up and bury the substantial buildings in the City and the West End, and finally choke up or materially destroy the Thames harbour, for all commercial purposes now useless. Misfortunes seldom come singly, and it is probable that with the loss of coal, of commerce, and of wealth, a weak or bad government may strengthen the calamity by passing obnoxious laws, and finally complete it by deserting the afflicted city for some more fortunate spot; and if social discord be not followed by foreign intervention, the inhabitants may reckon themselves particularly lucky. We can understand the sad feelings of the few remaining citizens, and their endeavours to save the grandest works with their utmost care. In the place of the busy continual murmur of life and bustle, everything is hushed and reposed. There are no factories and workshops to ring with human voices and operations; and the innumerable railways, once burdened daily with the weight of countless tons of human and mercantile traffic, are buried and forsaken. The deserted, useless river, made picturesque by the ruins of a nation's boast, is, alas! the Thames, the silvery, peerless Thames of the poets, the busy, wealthy river of bygone days. The ruins of the mighty bridges, the river embankment, the few noble blocks of buildings on its banks, will lessen in the future archaeologist's mind the gigantic remains of Rome and Athens, and give him some idea of the genius and enterprise of his fathers. The great wonder of ancient days will sink into insignificance, when compared with the more modern one. Fancy the delight with which the oft-quoted New Zealander will sit on the still firm though damaged London Bridge, and mark with rapture the iron and stone river-ways as far up the river as his eye will carry him, with the remains of cathedrals and churches, of terraces and public buildings, boldly rising up on either side. What a fine subject for moralising! or, if he be a 'Layard,' he may excavate, and search, and find new wonders to his heart's content, as long as he likes to persevere in his hobby. After a few years, it may become one of the favourite resorts of tourists and travellers, who will lionise the ruins, and talk wisely of the wealth and commerce of ancient Englishmen, of Alfred the Great, and Queens Elizabeth and Victoria; of Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, and Wordsworth; of Watt, Stephenson, and Brunel; of Pitt and Gladstone; of Nelson and Wellington. Future archaeologists will discover some remnants of old Drury Lane Theatre, which will occasion an interminable number of learned

essays on the dramatic genius of the ancient moderns. An excavation resulting in the discovery of a portion of the Library, or of the Geological Department of the British Museum, will be ample reward for years of toil and exertion, and will create as much sensation as that of Herculaneum and Pompeii in recent times. Then some enterprising genius may find his way to one of the many underground railways, or to a main sewer. Imagine the sensation produced by the discovery of a Milner's safe; the wranglings, disputes, and discussions concerning which part of the ruins of the Parliament Houses was appropriated by the Lords, and which by the Commons; the learned dissertations on the laws, government, manners, and customs of the people, as inferred from the remains of Somerset House, the law-courts, St Paul's Cathedral, and the public offices. Materials will be found in every direction to fire the imagination of numberless poets and historians. Many coming 'Gibbons' will reap immortality from their histories of the Decline and Fall of the City of London; students will vie with each other at the world's many universities to produce the best essays and poems on the same subject, for which prizes and praises will be liberally bestowed; scholars will sermonise, philosophers moralise. The grand old commercial city, the cradle as well as the nurse of science, will be a theme ever-fruitful and never-failing. The ancient naval glory of the nation, the deeds of Nelson and Wellington, the lonely river, once the safe harbour for a thousand ships, the noble metropolitan works and undertakings, will resound in song by numberless voices. Awe and admiration will forcibly strike the world's greatest thinkers and its bravest explorers.

With these sad reflections, we have the consolation to know that, though the city decays, the spirit of the place and of the nation will be ever fresh and living, and will be carried and disseminated by our children into all parts of the world. Even now, it is growing in America and Australia, in Hindustan and New Zealand. Our enterprise, even our language and literature, will be fondly preserved, when its authors and birth-place have fallen. The knowledge that our endeavours, though destined to come to nought after a season here, will reap a world's after a city's harvest, should incite us to increase them with might and main; so that the world may have the benefit of our vigour and our opportunity, and that when London is but a name, it may at least be one to be used by posterity with pride, and with worthy affection.

LORD ULSWATER.

CHAPTER III.—ST PAGANS.

It was a wild night. The sea moaned as if in pain, heaving with a dull sound against the cliff-foot. The wind howled shrilly, and the white-winged sea-mews, harbingers of the threatening storm, screamed out their harsh complaining cry as they flew inland. The sun had not long gone down, but the summer sky was black with driving clouds, and the mist floated, dim and vaporous, over the bare bleak downs.

St Pagans Abbey, built of gray stone, and standing lonely on the verge of the cliff, was hardly to be distinguished from the surrounding objects of that rugged coast-line. Huge, dark, and

melancholy, the old house stood like a sentinel mounting guard upon the frontier-line between land and sea. Its long facade would have been in complete darkness, but that the mingled light of fire and candle streamed from two of the windows on the ground-floor, looking seaward. And there was something sad in the very glow and redness of that unseasonable firelight, which told, as fires burning in the sweet summer-time are apt to tell, of illness and of suffering.

All the rest of the great pile, what with mist and what with the murky twilight, was in deep shadow. Through the gathering blackness, the keenest eye might have strained in vain to see such beauties as the place possessed—the broken shafts and shattered oriel of the Lady Chapel, the elaborate carving of the stone groins and mullions, or even the noble porch, over which still stood the weather-stained effigy of St Paganus himself, with episcopal staff and mitre, while beneath the saint's sandalled feet the Carnac coat of arms was deeply cut in the hard Caen stone; for the abbey and its broad lands had been a gift from King Henry VIII. to Sir Ranulph Carnac, and still belonged to the descendants of that fortunate knight. County histories and books of reference recorded St Pagans as the principal seat of Lord Ulswater.

A grand old house it was, but not a cheerful one. Something of the gloom and unwholesome stagnation of its former occupants clung to the place yet, and threw a shadow over the lives that were spent there. There were long passages, paved with stone or floored with oak; narrow stairs that wound tortuously up to square turrets overlooking the dull gray sea or the dull green downs; there were vast and lofty rooms, contrasting with cells into which modern philanthropy would not permit a felon to be thrust; and the very panels were of dark wood, that seemed to swallow up the sunlight on the brightest day in June. It was a house in which there lurked scores of unsuspected echoes, ready to burst forth and repeat, with ghostly hollowness, the clapping of a door, the shriek of the wind, or a heavy footfall on the flooring that covered crypts as extensive as the chambers above ground.

No wonder that the abbey had the ill name that adheres to many an ancient mansion, and was believed by the ignorant to be haunted and accursed. The old ecclesiastical owners, it was whispered in cottage and farmstead for leagues around, would not quite forsake the place whence the king had driven them forth. Strange noises were heard at night—so the legend ran. The pale gleam of tapers lighted by no earthly hands was sometimes seen to glimmer amid the ruins of the chapel, and the faint sound of music and of chanting was heard to float upon the midnight air. There was talk, too, of a spectral Monk that was seen, now and again, to glide with noiseless tread through the long passages that led from the refectory and the guest-chamber to what had been the abbot's house. Some were yet living who were obstinate in their assertion that they, warned by a creeping terror that came suddenly upon them when traversing the corridors alone, had looked round, and had seen that tall form, robed in its black Benedictine garb, with cowl drawn down, and girdle of cord, pass them by, stately and silent, ay, pass them by so near that the coarse robe of serge well-nigh touched them; yet there was no

sound, nothing but a chill, as if an ice-cold blast of wind had swept past. High wages were not always temptation enough to keep servants beneath the roof-tree of St Pagans Abbey; and indeed the present possessor, though for other than superstitious motives, kept aloof from the place.

The room whence the firelight threw its flickering gleam into the increasing darkness without, was the smallest of the spacious suite of saloons that fronted the sea—the smallest, but the one that had preserved the most thoroughly such features of its old design as might serve to conjure up pictures of the long-buried Past. It was called the Tapestry Room. The walls were hung with arras, admirably preserved, and of which the colours had faded but little since patient eyes and deft fingers had finished their toil upon that gigantic task of needle-work. These hangings represented some scriptural subject; and though the Jewish champions wore the armour of the fifteenth century, and the ladies were in the court-costume of Queen Margaret's day, the groups were boldly sketched, and the details wrought out with painful care. The ceiling was of black oak, polished like a mirror, and so was the floor, as far as the soft carpet permitted a margin of the shining wood to be visible. The furniture was imitated from the antique, with such concessions to modern ideas of comfort as were necessary to nineteenth-century inmates. There was a sort of alcove at one end of the chamber, which had once served the abbot as a private oratory, though the rich crucifix had long since been torn down by rude hands.

The two occupants of the room afforded a marked contrast to each other. The elder was a tall, gray-haired woman, gaunt and hard-featured, with high cheek-bones, and forehead deeply furrowed. She looked so stern and so strong in her cold pride, that it was not until the firm mouth softened into a smile that her true nature revealed itself. And yet Lady Harriet Ashe, aunt to the late lord, as well as to the present holder of the family honours, was a thoroughly good woman, gentler in deeds than in looks. Herself an old maid, with no ties but those of consanguinity, she had devoted her life to the sickly boy, her dead sister's son, who had last worn the Ulswater coronet; had nursed him and cared for him, and studied his whims, and been his best friend. Reginald Carnac, brother of the present lord, had owed it to his aunt's care that he ever grew up to be a man, to take his place among his peers, to marry, and to hail the birth of a son who might inherit after him. Then the black cloud of misfortune had closed around his manhood more darkly yet. Wifeless and childless, the late lord had been glad to die; and the kind old hand that had smoothed his pillow so often in his infancy, had had the task of closing his eyes for their last sleep.

But Lady Harriet did not leave St Pagans. The new owner, John, Lord Ulswater, was unmarried, and he rarely visited the great country-house where his ancestors had dispensed hospitality, so that Lady Harriet was still *de facto* mistress of the abbey. The other occupant of the room was a girl, whose face, in spite of its wax-like pallor, was loveliness itself, but a loveliness which saddened the gazer. The blue eyes were too large and too wistful, the thin cheek too transparent in its delicacy, and there was too much that was eager, too much that was thoughtful, in the expression of the whole countenance, for its looks to have been

consistent with healthy, joyous youth. Even in her attitude, the guest offered a forcible contrast to her hostess: whereas Lady Harriet, with old-fashioned rigidity, sat stiffly upright in her chair, as if her sixty-five years weighed lightly upon her, the visitor reclined upon a couch, and was propped up with soft cushions. A second glance told the cause of this. Ruth Morgan, with the face of an angel, was a hopeless invalid from her childhood up; a poor crippled thing, whose curved spine made her a sufferer for life. There was something anomalous in this girl's whole condition. She had rare beauty and considerable talents, but her infirmity shut her out from all the ordinary hopes of womankind. The daughter and the sister of two of the richest commoners in England, she was yet poor, and almost dependent on her brother; and although she was on terms of friendship and habitual intercourse with women of Lady Harriet's rank, she had no pretensions to high social standing. Her father, the architect, as the phrase runs, of his own fortune, had begun life with no other capital than his own strong arm and shrewd brains; he had died a millionaire, and had left his son a very wealthy man.

There was some sunshine in Ruth's dreary life, after all. Every one somehow grew to be fond of her. The hardest natures relented towards this poor pretty thing, to whom the crowning glory of womanhood was for ever denied. There was something in the sweet pale face, something in those great sad eyes, that softened the hearts of even the worldliest, for it was plain that Ruth's earthly pilgrimage would not be a long one. She was, as it were, marked for an early grave, and all the care of those who loved her could but delay the stroke for a little while. Those London physicians whose fame was highest, and whose fees were heaviest, had of late agreed in ordering the patient to the sea-side, and Lady Harriet had invited her to spend the early summer at St Pagans. It was better, she said, than a Brighton lodging or a villa at Ventnor, and she—Lady Harriet Ashe—would be the happier for having some one to nurse. There those two, guest and hostess, the proud patrician old maid and the dying girl, sat together in the Tapestry Room, with the curtains drawn back, and the warm red firelight flickering forth into the murky darkness without.

CHAPTER IV.—THE SHADOW OF THE PAST.

'It was a night like this,' said Lady Harriet, looking steadily at the fire that burned upon the hearth, as if she saw a vision of the past pictured in the ruddy embers lying, like glowing carbuncles, around the crackling logs. Any other than a wood-fire would have been an anachronism in that room, where the tapestry shook upon the walls as the wind forced its devious way through the ghostly galleries and passages of the old house. A log-fire it was, and the heavy andirons of parcel-gilt brass had once, as likely as not, been the abbot's own. 'A night like this—I remember it so well!' she continued, in a low tone, like that of one who thinks aloud.

'Then it was not sudden? It did not happen unexpectedly, as I had always heard it did?' asked Ruth, with an interest which her hostess instinctively felt to be no feigned one.

Lady Harriet turned towards the sofa. 'Sudden, yes; unexpected, no,' she made answer, in a voice

that sank almost to a whisper, and then added : 'The Monk had been seen by night once, twice, three times. Three times in three days. And then the lights in the chapel, and the music of the choir—I knew Evil was near. Ah, child, I should not say this to you ; you will laugh at me, as a foolish, superstitious old woman.'

'No, indeed no, dear Lady Harriet,' replied the invalid earnestly : 'I shall not laugh, believe me, at anything which you believe to concern the welfare of you and yours. I know you put faith in this tradition, but a haunted house has no terrors for me.'

'Nor for me, or I should scarcely stay at St Pagans,' said Lady Harriet with one of her grim smiles ; 'yet there are times when I hardly know what to think ; and, after all, the legend rests on no stronger evidence than the tattle of ignorant serving-men and maids. I never saw anything, nor did any member of the family. No ; I am wrong—Reginald did.'

'Your nephew—the late lord?' asked Ruth with a slight shudder, in spite of her professed incredulity.

'Yes,' answered Lady Harriet, as she sat, upright and rigid as a rock, with the firelight shining on her gray hair and furrowed brow—'Yes ; it was the night before the child died. John was away in London ; Reginald lay here, on that very couch where you are lying now, dear ; for this was his favourite room, and the fire burned brightly on the hearth, just as it does now, though the day had been a warm one. I left Reginald asleep, as I thought, and went up to the nursery, where the sick child lay. Then I came down, and found Reginald awake, and his face quite gray and haggard. He had seen, he said, a figure in the long black robes of a friar, standing in the doorway, and shaking its uplifted hand, with a gesture of menace at him as he lay. He could not see the face, not even the eyes, for the shadow of the cowl. Then, as he rose, it was gone, silently and swiftly, but he knew that he had seen the Monk, the impalpable enemy that haunts our dwelling, and heralds the grief to come. Next day, the child died.'

'It was strange,' said Ruth thoughtfully, glancing towards the doorway, across which there hung a heavy damask curtain, the massy folds of which presented some fanciful similarity to the monkish garb.

'It was,' replied Lady Harriet, pushing back her chair from the circle of the firelight's gleam—'it was strange. Poor Reginald—he was ill, and in a morbid, anxious state of mind just then—I did my best to persuade him that what he had seen was but the creation of a disordered imagination. His hopes were all so wrapped up in that poor motherless child up-stairs—the heir of the Ulswater title and estates ; and though there seemed no reason for apprehending that the boy would die, yet Reginald feared the worst ; and the worst came.—Do I weary you ?'

'No, no. Pray, tell me everything, if to do so does not give pain to yourself,' said Ruth, in her gentle voice.

Thus encouraged, Lady Harriet resumed : 'You know how I loved Reginald. I promised my dear sister on her death-bed that I would care for and cherish him, the sickly eldest son, as if he were my own ; and I faithfully kept my word. He was very dear to me, for his own sake and for Caroline's

sake ; and when he married, I confess that I felt jealous and angry that there should be another woman to come between my boy and myself, good and sweet as Edith was. I knew Reginald's merits as no one else knew them. He was shy and haughty, and not popular, like his brother, for everybody praised John, who seemed like sunshine in a house, while Reginald was slow to make friends. And then—two months after the birth of an heir—Lady Ulswater died, and her death broke my nephew's heart. I never saw him smile again, poor lad, until the hour of his own ending drew near. He smiled then, on that evening on which he died, and said that he should see her—Edith—very soon. And so they all went from me—Edith, and Guy, and Reginald, and left me, my dear, a lonely, desolate old woman, useful no longer in the world.'

She broke down now, with a great sob in her voice, and turned her face towards the fire, as if to hide her streaming eyes. She was a proud woman, and not prone to shew her sorrow by tears, but now the emotions that had been called into activity by her narrative were too much for her high-bred stoicism. The sofa was so near, that its occupant was able to stretch out her own thin little hand, terribly transparent and white to look upon, with the pale blue veins marking its delicate surface, and to lay it caressingly on the wrinkled, ring-covered hand of Lady Harriet.

'It is all my fault,' said Ruth ; 'I should not have asked'—Then she paused, hesitating, for the grief of the aged seldom fails to affect the young with a kind of awe.

But Lady Harriet's strong nerves soon triumphed over the anguish of the moment. She wiped away the tears with a sort of angry impatience, and her gaunt features were quite composed, and her deep voice more harsh than usual, as she turned towards her young friend and said : 'You shall not see me so weak again. It is not often, dear, that I have so good a listener as you. Few come to see me here, and I do not care to tell my stupid old stories to chattering women of the world or silly school-girls.—But I left my tale, such as it is, half told. It was a sad house we had of it, here at St Pagans. Up-stairs, little Guy Carnac, the infant heir, lay ill ; and here, in the Tapestry Room, his widowed father, my poor boy Reginald, passed his weary days stretched upon this sofa, sick in mind and body. The fits to which he had been subject from childhood, but which he had been wholly free from in later life, had been brought on once more by his passionate sorrow and despair when his young wife died. There he lay, wasted and worn to a shadow of his former self, and it seemed as if his frail thread of existence must snap at the first shock. What bound him to life was his great love for his boy, Edith's only child.' Here the speaker's stern voice quivered somewhat, then went firmly on. 'Reginald's nature was not demonstrative ; he was shy and reserved—almost awkward. I doubt if Edith herself ever quite understood how he loved her. When she was taken away, he had nothing left but this child on which to found a hope ; and it was wonderful to see how he loved the little fellow, on whom it was only too clear that the title and property must soon devolve ; for the doctors did not disguise the fact that Lord Ulswater was not long likely to be spared to us. And Guy was such a pretty child, a noble, frank-eyed boy, that any father might have

been proud of. He was ill, as I have said, but it was a trifling illness, to all appearance, a slight attack, that caused no alarm to me, and which the physician from Shellton-on-Sea smiled at as he talked of a speedy and certain recovery. It was but such an illness as care and a good constitution enable thousands of children to surmount. Reginald alone was nervous and despondent about his infant son.—You are very fond of your brother, Ruth?

A slight flush of colour came into the sick girl's death-pale face, and her voice trembled a little as she replied: 'Yes, very, very fond. But why, dear Lady Harriet?'

'Because, child,' answered the old lady, kindly patting the little weak hand that still rested on hers, 'because you will thus understand how very complete and absolute was Reginald's affection for his only son—as all of Edith that was left to him. He alone was fearful respecting the child, and I could not persuade him, nor could his brother, that there was nothing to fear. How well do I remember, on just such a night as this, as I said before, with the wind shrieking outside the abbey as it shrieks now, and the same screaming of the sea-birds that shunned the gathering storm, and the same hollow roar of the great sea among the caverns of the cliff—on just such a night as this, John, now Lord Ulswater, came suddenly down from London. He was very kind and considerate to his brother, always, and would read to Reginald for hours, in his clear pleasant voice, or sit and watch him when he was at the worst of his illness, with a patience and a tenderness which I had thought no one but a woman could shew. But John was a good brother—good in all things, I think—though I loved dear Reginald the best, perhaps because he wanted my love more than John did, for the younger of those two was the idol of rich and poor. I found John, whom we had not expected, in the Tapestry Room with Reginald, when I came down from seeing the sick child. It was the day after Reginald had seen the Monk, and that apparition, real or fancied, had filled him with fears for the child. Yet there seemed no cause for fear. Dr Dennis had but lately driven back to Shellton-on-Sea, assuring us that there was no reason for apprehension. His little patient, he said, was doing well. So I believed.'

Lady Harriet looked for a moment at the window nearest her, past which the white wreaths of mist swept, hurrying on the wings of the wind like ghostly squadrons of charging horse; and she listened for an instant to the increasing roar of the surges below, before she went on, in a grave, quiet voice:

'The child had been restless, but he had fallen asleep at last, and there he lay slumbering, with one little arm under his head. The wan, tiny face had something piteous in its look, as it lay half hidden by the soft pillow, under the silk hangings of that great old-fashioned bed. The nursery at St Pagans is a great gloomy room, not at all, to my thinking, what a nursery should be; and the wood-work over the child's head was carved and gilded to represent a coronet, with the Carnac motto in gold letters beneath. Poor pretty babe—he was never to succeed to the honours that his ancestors had won. I remember feeling that there was something plaintive in the contrast between the little sufferer and all the cumbrous old-world splendour of the apartment which was called the King's Room,

from a legend that Charles II. had once slept in it. The pillows were bordered with lace, and the counterpane was a wonderful piece of old needle-work, in scarlet and white; and there were fine old pictures in dull gold frames on the panelled walls. There were the medicine vials and glasses on a table, and some hothouse fruit, untasted, and the toys that the poor child's little hands were never more to play with. A feeble light was burning. Everything was exquisitely neat and orderly, even to the dress of the nurse herself, who sat, with an open book before her, beside the shaded lamp.

'Have I mentioned this nurse before? No. She was quite a young woman, little more than a girl, and I could hardly believe at first that Mrs Fletcher, at her age, could be married. Married she was, however, and her husband was abroad—a sailor or an emigrant, I forget which. She was of very respectable parentage, and better taught than the majority of servants. John it was who recommended her, having known her father, I understood, and she proved a treasure of carefulness and steadiness during the short, short time in which her services were needed.

'Well, this Mrs Fletcher, Emma Fletcher, from the north of England, was the nurse; and I recollect her face well as I saw it that night. A very remarkable face, my dear. I may as well own at once that I did not and could not like her, though I am sure my antipathy was but a foolish prejudice. She was very good-looking—dark and handsome, like a Spaniard or a Jewess, with hair as black as night, and a rich complexion, and great dark eyes, that looked as if they could flash with anger or scorn, though she was always quite respectful and well-behaved. The first time I ever saw Mrs Fletcher, I was struck by an extraordinary resemblance between her face and some other face that I knew well, and it puzzled me, the likeness. Have you noticed, Ruth, the picture in the great dining-room, nearest the fireplace, that of Jael slaying Sisera? Because Jael's fierce dark young face, as she bends over the sleeper she is about to murder, is so very like the face of Guy's nurse, alike in its wild beauty and a sort of stealthy savagery, like that of a tigress stealing upon her prey. I have often thought since then of the curious resemblance.

'Mrs Fletcher sat there, quiet and patient, and kept watch over the child. She had not been long at St Pagans; but it was evident that she was growing attached to her little charge, a bright lovable boy, with a generous nature already beginning to look out of his sunny eyes. And the boy was fond of her. She was rather a silent young woman; and I heard from the other servants that she was very reserved with them, and very proud. She did not keep company with any member of the household here, but spent her whole time with the child; and the servants now and then found her weeping passionately, so they said, but she was not one to tell her sorrows. Most likely, she was anxious about her husband abroad. I left her up-stairs, that night, and I recollect that the likeness to the picture struck me more forcibly than usual as I caught the last glimpse of her dark eyes, and the white teeth just visible between her red lips as she answered my last words.

'That night, the child died—died in his sleep. In the morning, Nurse Fletcher awoke, and found him dead and cold, poor pretty innocent! His

ending was painless, but it was a dreadful blow to us all. On the day of the child's funeral, Reginald was seized by the paralytic attack from which he never recovered, though he lingered on long, for months and years, between life and death, a living wreck. He died, and was buried beside his wife and son; and that is how John came to be the present Lord Ulswater.—Hush, my love—I cannot talk any more just now. I will go to my room for a while. It will be better so.'

And the conversation ended.

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD.*

WITH the year 1768, a very important stage in the career of Josiah Wedgwood commenced. We have seen him hitherto working against great difficulties, contending with expense rather more than commensurate with his gains, when his originality, enterprise, unflinching perseverance, and hopefulness are taken into account; and in the wide and general sense—for even then, in an age which believed implicitly in patronage, even in the case of literature, the profane vulgar were the best clients—against the ignorance, supineness, and indifference of the public in matters appertaining to art. A manifest and notable improvement had indeed taken place in the crockery-ware of the nation, but it was pretty much confined to the mere utilities as yet; it had not gone beyond cream-coloured dinner-services, and marbled and gilt vases; but the partners were now about to undertake great things. They were remarkable men, this Mr Wedgwood and Mr Bentley, and even in this abnormally busy age, which, it is not to be denied, is fussy also, and dearly loves to make a noise about its doings, they would be regarded as enterprising, active, and public-spirited. Here is Mr Wedgwood testing, buying, contracting for, under such difficulties as only those can understand who urgently need something which can only be gotten by a parliamentary grant, a peculiar porcelain clay from Ayoree, in South Carolina, with which he intends to do wonders; working out in the fine plastic material the grand and beautiful designs which had so long bided their time in his truly artistic mind. The details of his manoeuvres in this matter form quite a political study, and it is interesting to note the difficulties placed in his way by official supineness, private greed, and general bad faith. He did succeed, however, and imported from the land of the Cherokees a material of which he made remarkable use.

Meantime, Mr Bentley is busy with the draining of swamps and the cultivation of moorland, with inland navigation and coal-mining. He writes pamphlets, confers with *savans* in all these different branches, and keeps up a brisk, continuous, sympathetic correspondence with his partner in London, all the while entering minutely into the particulars, hopes, fears, and experiments wherewith Mr Wedgwood was then

engaged. An odd man, doubtless, this Mr Bentley, and either so devoid of a sense of humour that he did not see when he made himself ridiculous, or gifted with humour of a satiric turn, and capable of quizzing his artistic partner. He gravely proposed about this time that a specimen-basket of chips of some remarkably fine cannel-coal, in the disinterment of which he was interested, should be kept at the pottery-pattern rooms in Charles Street, for the inspection of the nobility and gentry. Mr Cox, the manager, failed to perceive the fun of the thing, if meant as a joke; or, taking it seriously, was too much disgusted to reply. So this unique proposal for the blending of the useful and the beautiful came to nothing. About this time, too, Mr Bentley did something in tanning, and a good deal in scientific agriculture, then a sucking science. The leading chemists, too, were at work for Mr Wedgwood; and his letters to his partner abound in curious and interesting details of the experiments he was having made at this time; but of the successive stages of the analyses nothing is known, as the results were written in cipher, and confided to Mrs Wedgwood, Darwin, and Bentley only. To general readers, the general facts only are of interest, such as the use of spar, at this period for the first time, as a 'body-ingredient.' This *terra ponderosa* was very expensive, and the illicit procuring and selling of it were fenced about with all sorts of pains and penalties. A few years after its utility had been ascertained, certain German porcelain-manufacturers obtained supplies of this fusible spar in a surreptitious manner from the *débris* lying about the once celebrated mines of Anglezark in Lancashire. 'They employed a small farmer who lived amid the moorland wastes around the mines, to gather the spar, which had been long before thrown out of the shafts as refuse, break it in pieces, pack it in boxes, and convey it to Chorley, the nearest town, and then despatch it to Liverpool, to be shipped. In order to carry out their operations with the greater secrecy, the man and his wife made their gatherings only on moonlight nights. But at length their movements raised the curiosity of persons passing across the waste; rumours got abroad, and reached the ears of Sir Frank Standish, the lord of the manor, and a stop was put to their proceedings. To inquiries, the man remained silent; and it was only some years later, when upon his death-bed, he told a neighbour that, long prior to discovery, he had carried on the sale of this spar, that it was exported to some porcelain-works in Germany, and that he had sold it for five guineas per ton.'

While Bentley was pursuing his multifarious schemes, and Wedgwood was importing a precious earth, destined to the daintiest of uses, under all sorts of guarantees, and with much precaution, from America, the latter was also making use of the manual dexterity, fineness, and precision with which he had been endowed by nature, which had been evidenced when he had occupied the humblest position on the 'thrower's' bench; and which had no doubt been intensified by his

* *Life of Josiah Wedgwood.* By Eliza Meteyard. Vol. II. Hurst and Blackett. Continued from *Chamber's Journal*, No. 77, page 373, June 17, 1865.

lameness, as when a man has a superior intellect to guide him, he always contrives to throw double work on one set of faculties, if another be perforce condemned to inaction or imperfect use. He was constantly improving the machinery and tools used in his art, furnishing the necessary drawings with his own hand, advancing the perfection of the turning-lathe, and doing a variety of other mechanical handinesses, whereof his letters contain interesting, though necessarily technical details. His life was in full career just then; the fulness of his content, and yet the ardour of his ambition, are delightfully evident; and there is nothing pleasanter to observe about Mr Wedgwood than that he never was a grumbler, either about his health or his affairs.

Mr Boulton of Soho, the famous engineer, makes his appearance in Wedgwood's affairs in connection with the engine-lathe, and the approach of the era of steam lends a vast impetus to the art of pottery, as to progress in general. The new invention superseded one by Mr Wedgwood of a sort of wind-mill, of which a funny drawing is given—the wind represented by a fat chubby face with puffed-up cheeks and staring eyes, like the 'look-out' cherub on an eighteenth-century tombstone. With the improved mechanism came the undertaking of great works; and in 1768, Mr Wedgwood established an Exhibition Room in St Martin's Lane—that in Charles Street being too small for his more ambitious purposes—and sent up quantities of goods from Staffordshire, though he knew his doing so must entail certain and considerable loss for a time, as the cost of carriage was nine shillings per ton, and any proportionate increase of price was impracticable. In May of the same year, Mr Wedgwood had his leg amputated; he had been suffering much from it—the limb was only a hindrance to him—so he had it taken off. The habits of the Burslem people were indeed business-like, and the prosperity of the concern not likely to be perilled by inattention to the main chance, or sentimental divergences. Witness the following remarkable effusion addressed to Mr Cox, representing the 'house' in London, by Peter Swift, head-man at Burslem, on the occasion of the operation. The note is appended to an invoice of cream-ware, 'piggins, cream-pots, salts, &c.' and the affectionate writer says:

BURSLEM, May 28, 1768.

SIR—Your favour of the 26th is just come to hand, but can make no reply to the contents. Mr Wedgwood has this day had his leg taken off, and is as well as can be expected after such an execution. The Rev. Mr Home's goods are packed, and one crate for the warehouse, the particulars of which I shall insert at foot, or as much as time will permit: Mr Chester's goods will be delivered on Thursday next.—I am, &c. PETER SWIFT.

A remarkable man, evidently, and an invaluable clerk, no doubt.

From the beginning of 1768, the rapid improvement in ornamental ware went on without a check; and its history is furnished by a series of invoices. Enamelling took the place of printing, in the rarer kinds; and dessert-services were manufactured of exquisite texture, and designs from the antique. The famous cream-ware was exported to France,

Germany, Russia, Holland, Spain, the West India Islands, the East Indies, and, in spite of the inevitable interruptions caused by the war, to the ports of North America. The taste for Wedgwood-ware at home was becoming a rage; and Mr Wedgwood put forth all his native artistic taste and all his commercial energy. He employed the best artists; his friends, many of them naturalists and collectors, lent him rare specimens of shells, flowers, fruits, butterflies, and other beautiful objects; he had access to the best works of art in England; and the beautiful landscapes and scenes of country-life, reproduced in his porcelain-ware, prove with how much taste and judgment he availed himself of his opportunities. In 1768, some black-marble vases of extraordinary beauty, and four antique vases 'with serpent-handles twisted and plinths gilt,' appear in an invoice, and thenceforth the plentiful results of Mr Wedgwood's studies from the antique make themselves evident. He laid the small but choice collection in the British Museum under contribution; he drew on the resources of the cabinets of the fortunate rich and noble who had got into the habit of going abroad a good deal during the previous forty years, and had brought back their trophies of classic art. The Duke of Bedford, Earl Gower, and Lord Cathcart were useful friends—it was the custom then to call them patrons—of Mr Wedgwood, and the last lent him Count de Caylus's great book, which he carried about with him from place to place, and studied with intense avidity, and with results which all the world can estimate. Mr Hamilton, afterwards Sir William, did Mr Wedgwood an immense service by his publication of the engravings of the famous master-pieces in his possession, and the products of his excavations at Herculaneum. The letter-press was executed by M. D'Hancarville, a sound scholar; the copies were made by the best French and Italian artists. The result was a splendid work, never indeed surpassed. Mr Hamilton distributed a few of the proofs among his friends, of whom Lord Cathcart was one, and he, in his turn, transferred them to Mr Wedgwood. The famous potter fell upon them with delight; they inspired him—they enchanted him; and 'from henceforth,' says his biographer, 'we can trace not merely a recurrence to antique forms, but an elaborate preparation to copy, if not to rival, the master-pieces of Etruscan and Greek ceramic art.'

In 1768, Lord Cathcart went out to St Petersburg as ambassador-extraordinary, and Mr Wedgwood received an order for the supply of his lordship's outfit in the crockery department. He went to work in the most elaborate style, and in an enthusiastic spirit, as his letters to Mr Bentley indicate, and began to experiment with colours, attempting encaustic painting by an improved method, founded on Count de Caylus's discovery of that pursued by the ancients. While he was doing such great things in ceramic art, ornamental metallic art was also undergoing important changes, and making great progress; and about this time, the following passage occurs in one of Horace Walpole's letters: 'Then we have Etruscan vases made of earthenware from two to five guineas, and ornolu, and never made here before, which succeeds so well, that a tea-kettle which the inventor offered for one hundred guineas, sold by auction for one hundred and thirty. In short, we are at the height of extravagance and luxury, for we

do improve rapidly in taste as well as in the former.' Boulton, who was pressing the improvements in the metallic arts as vigorously as Mr Wedgwood was pressing those in the ceramic, was an interesting man in his way, as Mr Smiles has taught us lately, and the friendship between him and the potter-partners was complete and undisturbed. We are not vouchsafed details of all the fine things the Burslem firm manufactured for Lord Cathcart, but no doubt they were many and magnificent. How strangely Queen Mary's collection of mugs and pipkins must have begun about this time to look, to the eyes of those who were aware of the reverence in which these and similar monstrosities had once, and that not very long ago, been held.

In 1769, the works at Etruria and those at Chelsea were in full career; the London house was a resort for several members of the highest nobility and gentry endowed with taste and comprehension for works of art. Encaustic colours were coming to perfection, and the manufacture of vases and urns was going on with vigour. One day in June 1769, Mr and Mrs Wedgwood, with their two children, and a pleasant escort of friends, came riding through the green lanes to 'The Useful Works' at Etruria, and the party entering the 'throwing-room,' Mr Wedgwood took off his coat, donned a workman's apron, and threw with great precision six vases; afterwards, he perfected his work at the lathe; and we have a drawing of one of these vases, in the black basalt body, with classical figures, and a fac-simile of the inscription in honour of the day. Etruria Hall, his private residence, a very handsome house, with well-arranged grounds, was completed in this year.

For a little while, just when things were at their brightest, and Mr Wedgwood's ambition was highest, he was threatened with the terrible calamity of blindness; but the danger passed away, and for several years unblemished prosperity and ever-increasing success was his lot. Domestic happiness he enjoyed in no stinted measure. He had an excellent wife, dutiful and promising children, and did not in the least resemble Palissy, his predecessor in the ceramic art, in person, morals, or manners. Neither did his smoothly prosperous career bear any likeness to the sordid misery and bitterness of that of the great French artist, to whom, with all his ability, he was almost as little comparable as Boulton was to Benvenuto Cellini. Mr Wedgwood became quite the fashion; and in 1773, we find him recording frequent visits to Buckingham House, where he sees her Majesty Queen Charlotte, who had a taste for crockery, and concerning whom the worthy gentleman says, with fitting awe and adulation: 'She has more sensibility' (probably he meant sense), 'true politeness, engaging affability, and sweetness of temper, than any great lady I ever had the honour of speaking to.' He had increasing opportunities for confirming his loyal opinion about this time, for he was constantly called upon by duchesses and others of high degree, and did showman to the vases, &c. in unexceptionable style. 'An aristocrat by nature, he was the most courtly of chapmen,' says Miss Meteyard; and though the observation is rather absurd—for he displays no more of what we suppose is intended to be conveyed by aristocracy of nature, than he possessed aristocracy of birth—there is no doubt he made himself very agreeable. He was a man of considerable talent, consummate energy, tact,

and industry, and more than respectable business powers, singularly sincere and unaffected—qualities which, had he been an 'aristocrat by nature,' he must have belied; and no more a snob or a tuft-hunter than he was a Raphael or a John of Bologna. Great people are richer than little people, and can buy objects of art, which others can only admire, and Josiah Wedgwood naturally accommodated himself to the manners of his customers. His correspondents were numerous and important, though they only wrote to him about their dinner-services and their Etruscan vases. He did a great deal of work for Lord Chatham; and, some time subsequent to 1774, executed a medallion in cameo of the great statesman, which was an admirable likeness. The account of his scientific friends, with whom his intercourse was equal, real, enduring, and widely useful in its results, has truer interest. Dr Darwin, James Kier, Dr Small, and James Watt, are in correspondence with him, and what is said of them outweighs the 'good patroness' business, and the stories of the great ladies, and their bargaining on their own behalf or on that of the queen, who never paid more than she could avoid for anything, and beat down an artist just as she beat down any other tradesman. In 1772, the labours of the firm were great, arduous, and profitable. Enamelled dinner-services of great value and beauty, and which were on public view for a month, were made for the king, the Princess-dowager, and the king of Prussia. Numerous 'Rockingham vases' were made; and extensive orders in the cream-ware executed for the Portuguese nobility. Several famous medallions are of this period, and there is not an artist of eminence unemployed by Wedgwood.

In 1773, an order from the Empress of Russia, prompted by her admiration of the specimens in Lord Cathcart's possession, was received at the works. Her majesty commanded a vast service of cream-ware, for every purpose of the table, on each piece of which was to be enamelled a different view of English scenery. As the service was to be for use at the *Grenouillère*, a child and frog were to be painted on the underside. Subsequently, the child was omitted, and the frog only painted, green within a shield. The difficulty and expense of executing the czarina's order were very considerable; and the history of all the negotiations with artists, draughtsmen, and engravers, the consultations between the partners, and the means taken to secure them against loss, and make the imperial portion of the contract binding, is curious and interesting. The details of the execution of this Brobdingnagian job are amusing; and the bills shew that twenty-eight enamellers, of whom seven were females, were constantly employed. In June 1774, such portions of the Russian dinner-service as were completed were exhibited in the new show-rooms of Wedgwood and Bentley, in Greek Street, Soho. The venerable gossip, sight-seer, and royalty-worshipper, Mrs Belamy, writes on 7th June: 'I am just returned from viewing the Wedgwood-ware that is to be sent to the Empress of Russia. It consists of as many pieces as there are days in the year.' Ultimately, the manufacturers made little but honour and reputation by it, owing to the dishonesty of Russian officials, or the enmity of the consul: the empress paid £3000 for the service, which cost them £2410, 10s. 5d., without calculating many extras. This very unsatisfactory sum is

done in Mr Bentley's own hand. Mr Wedgwood, who, though not servilely minded, had caught the prevalent trick of servile expression, was fond of speaking of the Empress Catharine as his 'great patroness,' and did not blame her for the niggardliness of the price, of which, indeed, as she had some of the quasi-good qualities attendant on her special vices, she was probably wholly guiltless. She was too thoroughly and utterly profligate to be thrifty: stinginess is the crowning quality of prudes. This great production of his art achieved the European celebrity of the firm.

In 1775, the era of cameos set in, and the blue and white ware, familiarly associated in the mind of the public with Wedgwood, came into the highest fashion. In this year, Mr Wedgwood being in Derbyshire in search of 'spaiith fusible,' found and adopted the material called cawk, and recognised its ability to carry out his loftiest projects, to do the highest artistic work. Mr Bentley looked out for a modeller, and found Flaxman. The young artist had sustained a severe disappointment in his unsuccessful competition for the gold medal of the Royal Academy. Reynolds underrated him; but Sir Joshua knew very little of sculpture; and Flaxman did his work admirably from the first. His first bill to Mr Wedgwood is preserved, and shews how he worked in company with his father, on a variety of classical subjects. He loved antique art, and his name remains eternally associated with its adoption in England. He executed with great rapidity an immense number of cameos in the white body; and in the meantime the ornamental manufacture was undergoing great and numerous developments, enamelling was brought to wonderful perfection, and encaustic tile-making became an important and beautiful branch of the art. The catalogue of Flaxman's works is a most interesting study; it exhausts the classics and mythology, and includes several fine architectural designs, and some exquisite 'tablets,' which had the misfortune to offend the taste of Queen Charlotte, whose education at Mecklenburg, of which she gave an account herself, which, if she ever could have been suspected of humour, might have passed for a caricature, must have eminently disqualified her to pronounce an opinion. But though she was notoriously ignorant, she was a queen; and the tablets failed. Wedgwood was very philosophical about it, calmly remarking: 'My tablets only want age and scarcity to make them worth any price.' Time and experience have justified his opinion.

So, for years, the story of the Wedgwood family is one of ever-increasing prosperity and fame. It would be useless, indeed impossible, to enumerate the achievements of the firm. Perhaps the fine medallion portraits of the distinguished men of an age peculiarly prolific in great men, have the greatest interest, as they are the most rich in associations.

In 1777, Mr Bentley and his family went to reside at Turnham Green, and the partners and friends were for the short remainder of Bentley's life much separated, to their common grief. The families exchanged visits and portraits; and the correspondence, of which a very small portion of Bentley's share is preserved, did not slacken. The final parting between the friends was not to be long delayed. Bentley died, it is presumable of a brief illness, in 1780. Mr Wedgwood was on his way to see him, but arrived too late. He is buried

at Chiswick, and the inscription on his monument is a wonderful specimen of pompousness and bad taste. After his friend's death, Wedgwood relinquished much of the personal superintendence of the ornamental works, and gave himself up to the close study of chemistry, mining, and other scientific pursuits. Political and social changes told on the district of the potteries in many ways, but did not affect the prosperity of the works at Etruria, where they continued to turn out beautiful specimens of ware in objects of every conceivable variety. A notable event in the history of the manufacture was the application of the 'jasper body' to the purposes of personal ornament. Rings, seals, necklaces, brooches, pins, earrings, bracelets, buckles, chatelaines, watch-cases, watch-keys, snuff-boxes, &c. were formed wholly of the most exquisite cameos and intaglios, the setting being gold, silver, or steel. These were produced in extraordinary numbers, and were largely patronised by the queen, and the aristocracy of rank and wealth. The designs are either portraits, of which an immense number were made, or classical subjects, and are extremely beautiful, though, according to present taste, not suitable for wearing, but only for the collections, where they are safely lodged.

Commercial politics occupied Mr Wedgwood's attention during his later years, and he made himself master of the statistics of trade to an extent which rendered his assistance valuable to Mr Pitt. He eagerly favoured the proposed commercial treaty with France in 1783, and diligently attended the committee of the Lords in Council. The rapid development of trade between France and England which ensued upon the treaty, told largely on Mr Wedgwood's fortunes, which reached their acme of prosperity in 1788. A year previously, Mr Wedgwood had begun to take an active share in the cause of the abolition of slavery, and he never relaxed in his labours in that cause until his death. At this period, he was making great numbers of most beautiful cameo medallions; and in 1788, executed a famous one commemorative of the recovery of the king.

In 1786, Mr Wedgwood purchased, for one thousand and twenty-nine pounds, the famous Barberini or Portland Vase, which had been brought to England by Sir William Hamilton in 1784; and his splendidly successful copies of which were among the most famous of his final works. He was an old man now, but his energies, his faculties, and his tastes remained unimpaired. He was not less remarkable for the number of his intellectual pursuits, than for the thoroughness with which he carried them out. He was a generous, a considerate, and a highly principled man, but careful, and he never wasted money in his investigations, though he was always ready to expend it liberally, as a means to an end. The comprehensiveness of his intellect, and the admirably well-arranged condition in which it was habitually to be found, were his most remarkable characteristics. He died in his sixty-fifth year, in January 1795, having amassed a fortune of half a million sterling, won the good opinion of all classes of his countrymen, secured a lasting reputation for talent, industry, and enterprise, fulfilled all his duties in life well, and seen his children's children.—Surely an enviable history.

The splendid volumes in which Josiah Wedgwood is commemorated, are rare specimens of art,

in their way, and are worthy records of one of whom the epitaph upon his tomb says truly: 'He converted a rude and inconsiderable manufactory into an elegant art, and an important part of national commerce.'

MY FIRST (AND LAST) DESCENT INTO A LEAD-MINE.

IT HAPPENED to be staying at a friend's house in one of the northern counties of England one summer, when it was suggested by our host that I should ride over to Authorpe, and see the splendid hydraulic engine which had been recently erected for the purpose of draining the lead-mines. My ardour was but slightly damped when I was told that an inspection of the engine was not to be accomplished without the hazard of a tiring and comparatively dangerous descent of the 'climbing-way.'

There were at the time I speak of but few hydraulic engines of the kind we proposed to visit, so the resolve to make the inspection was, in spite of its comparative danger to a novice, quickly formed. On arriving at the mine, we sent for the 'captain' of the works, and under his directions, divested ourselves of all our clothes, and substituted the common working-dress of the miners; and each of us was furnished with a lump of clay about the size of an orange, into which (a hole being made with your thumb) a half-penny candle was inserted. Our party consisted of the captain, one of the miners, my cousin, and myself.

A few yards distant from the 'coe' (or hut in which we had made our toilets) was a trap-door about a yard square, and this being opened, disclosed a nasty black-looking hole, that might have been 'any depth,' but which was, it seems, only sixty feet. On two of the opposite sides of the mine, and resting on little ledges in the angles, were long pieces of wood about three inches wide by about an inch and a half thick, and eighteen inches one above another. The captain (whom we will call Mr Darnton) first descended, after him the miner, then my cousin, and last of all your humble servant. The mode of progression consisted in digging the outside edge of the soles of your boots into the side of the shaft, so as to get all the hold you could of the narrow ledges of the 'stemples,' as they are called; and as to your hands, you were cautioned not to lay hold of the nearest stemple to your shoulder, but rather to stoop and rest on the lowest one practicable; so that, in case of a foot slipping, the muscles of the arms might not be suddenly called upon when in the comparatively relaxed position of a bent elbow.

Sixty feet of this sort of work brought us to a gallery about five yards in length, and at the end of this was another sixty feet of climbing-way, and then another gallery, and so on, until we reached the 'level,' into which, at quarter-minute intervals, a tremendous body of water rushed through a cast-iron pipe about twenty inches in diameter. This intermittent little river—for it really was one in miniature—was the water lifted

by the engine at every stroke—and she was making at that time four strokes a minute.

Our difficulties now had their commencement. 'The engine, gentlemen,' said our very intelligent guide, 'is at the other end of that pipe, and the pipe is fifteen feet long. We must crawl through it, one at a time; and I can tell you it is rather an awkward journey. I will go first, and you can form an idea of the way of crawling by seeing what I do. Be careful to raise yourselves as high as you can when you hear the valve of the engine clap-to, for that is a sign she is beginning her stroke, and the water will be through like a shot; so mind and let it run under you, and take care it does not put your candle out.'

We promised to observe all his cautions, and he at once crept into the pipe. There was something frightful about the whole affair, and the danger seemed magnified by the tremendous noise of the valve every time it went-to on the return stroke. It was, even at our end of the pipe, like a clap of thunder, and seemed to shake the solid limestone rock against which we stood.

After about a minute's interval, we heard Darnton shout to us to come on, but to be careful, and not enter more than one at a time, and for each to wait till the other had got well through.

My cousin now essayed the journey, and being, as he was, a sixteen-stone man, and forty-four inches round the chest, I felt exceedingly nervous on the score of his safe arrival at the other side. Having waited for the next lift of water to run off, he instantly entered the pipe; but on getting half-way through, he turned his shoulders too square, and was for a few moments quite fast, and before he could right himself again, the engine made another stroke; the consequence being that the water was instantly dammed up to his face, and the candle put out. A violent struggle and an involuntary raising of the body allowed the water to get away; and he had fortunately just time to get his breath and be ready for the next rush of water, which came with its usual tremendous force; but he was able to allow it to pass under him. By dint of great exertion, he emerged on the other side quite safe, but a good deal frightened.

I would now most willingly have retraced my steps, but did not like being 'chaffed,' so took my turn, and being of a thin habit of body, got safe through between the strokes of the engine; and now we were in the presence of the monster!

I could not accurately describe this splendid piece of machinery without the aid of diagrams. Suffice it to say, that she is driven by an upright column of water about two hundred and eighty feet high, and takes the pressure just as a steam-engine would—namely, by the opening of a slide-valve. She can work readily up to five hundred horse-power, and would then make seven strokes a minute. When I saw her, she was at about half her power. To give some idea of her size, I may mention that the joints alone of the upright piston-rod were at least the size of a farming-wagon body! The operation of taking in the water for each stroke, accompanied as it was by the inward opening of the valve, and the sound of the water, was awful enough; but, as I said previously, the closing of the same valve by the sudden pressure of a column of water equal to five hundred horse-power, was 'a thing to remember.'

The shaft in which we now stood was about a

hundred and thirty yards in depth, and fifteen feet diameter, and in this awful place was the stupendous engine constantly going night and day, in a darkness made almost more invisible by our little candles.

And now came a serious question—Shall we return through that horrible pipe, or shall we ascend by the ladders in the engine-shaft? The alternative was as follows. If we went through the pipe, there was the danger of sticking fast; and if by the main shaft, there was no sort of protection in case of a slip off a ladder; and these ladders were ranged one above another in lengths of about thirty feet, and as nearly as possible perpendicularly, with no sort of fence or guard. At the top of each length was a small platform of wood, about a yard square; and these were the only resting-places. Darnton told us that if we decided to go up the main shaft we must, when once started, *go forward*; that no retracing of one's steps could be allowed, and that we must not attempt to look down.

After a few minutes' deliberation, we resolved to go up by the ladders. I went last; and what with the darkness, the tremendous noise of the engine when she took the stroke, and last, not least, an incident that I hope never to experience again, I never was more uncomfortable in my life. We had arrived within about twenty yards of the top, and I felt very much fatigued, and the tallow from the candle I held had run all over my right hand, which circumstances rendered a hold of the ladder-staves less secure. To rest my aching arms, I happened to lean back with all my weight, when about the top of the last ladder but two, and this caused the nail fastening that side of the ladder nearest to the wall to *draw out, and the ladder itself to twist round!* It is now thirty years ago, but I can almost at the present day feel my hair stand on end, as it most assuredly did at that instant. Thank God, the other side held, and I got safely to the top; but I resolved that for the future my proceedings should be best described by the words composing the heading of this article.

THE LINCOLNSHIRE BECK.

THROUGH no steep rocks and nodding fern,
My devious currents stray;
No fall annoys at every turn,
No boulders block my way.

The cold gray meadow fringed with weed,
My early struggles sees;
Acres of furrowed clay succeed,
With solitary trees.

Content to hold a level course,
By croft and grange to flow,
I press on still with gentle force,
Meandering to and fro.

What though no lustrous lilies float
Within my quiet bends,
No water-spider steers his boat,
No primrose fragrance lends;

Yet men will bless my steady streams,
Their herds rejoice to drink;
And children pluck, with joyful screams,
The poor blooms on my brink.

Adown my banks the swallow flies;
My streams reflect the stars;
And o'er me every day that dies
Ripples in golden bars.

I boast no glowworms, but when Eve
Hangs o'er her best-loved brooks,
The night-moths mystic dances weave
Above my sedgy nooks.

I fertilise in drought and frost
Each parish where I go,
And only sigh by bush or post,
What time my strength is low.

Though oft, like men, some bubble vain
I chase with purpose weak,
Of patient work and duty, plain
My turbid eddies speak.

Perchance a thoughtful soul may find
Beside my humble banks,
Sights to refresh his jaded mind,
And verses for his thanks.

One sees a thousand beauties where
Earth bounds another's gaze;
And Fancy's sun, the darkest sphere
Can light with brightest rays.

And so my shallow-sluggish streams,
True wisdom babbling, creep,
Flow through their poet's waking dreams,
And soothe his noonday sleep.

Unlovely, if you will, each stage
Of life I flow along;
And murmur on from age to age
My soft contented song.

Until, despite my seeming sloth,
Despite my roaming free,
The time comes, as to all it doth,
When I must sight the sea—

Must mingle with its larger tide,
Be lost in Life's strange bourne—
That end to which all creatures glide,
And whence they ne'er return.

The Publishers of CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL beg to direct the attention of CONTRIBUTORS to the following notice:

1st. All communications should be addressed to the Editor, 47 Paternoster Row, London.

2d. To insure the return of papers that may prove ineligible, postage-stamps should in every case accompany them.

3d. All MSS. should bear the author's full CHRISTIAN name, surname, and address.

4th. MSS. should be written on one side of the leaf only.

Unless Contributors comply with the above rules, the Editor cannot undertake to return rejected papers.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by all Booksellers.